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We love popular culture, and recognize its important role in bringing historical topics to the public’s attention. Of course, as historians, we may cringe from time to time when Hollywood takes great liberty with what we know to be the factual story. However, we also appreciate that this can make for great teaching opportunities.

Thanks to our TPS GRA, Taylor Stewart, and undergraduate volunteer, Aaron Shepherd, for putting together this issue!

News

• New resources available! Check out our newest lesson plan “To Kill a Mockingbird: Real Women of Alabama” written by Cynthia Savage from Central Magnet School in Murfreesboro. We also have a new primary source set, “Silver or Gold,” which features source material from our February workshop exploring the currency debates from the late 1800s and early 1900s.

• TPS- MTSU will be partnering with Tennessee History Day beginning this summer to offer multiple workshops across the state. Those workshops will begin in July and run through the early part of the 2016-2017 school year. Check next month’s newsletter for dates, locations, and registration information.

Theme: History in the Movies Vol. 2

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Upcoming Events:

• June 2 (Memphis) - “Teaching the Memphis Massacre” and “Crossing the Veil: W.E.B. DuBois in Tennessee” sessions at Shelby County Social Studies Institute. Open to Shelby County educators. Session times TBA.

• June 9-10 (Knoxville) - “Extracting Text Documents” workshop at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. Attendance is mandatory for both days. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

• June 14-16 (Murfreesboro) - “Tennessee in the New South: Politics and Progressivism” Summer Institute at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County. Attendance is mandatory for all three days. For more information or to register, email Kira Duke.

• June 21 (Lebanon) - “Resources and Strategies for 4th and 5th Grade Social Studies” In-service workshop for Wilson County Schools from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

AWESOME Source of the Month:

The enchanted drawing. [1900]

Our newsletter is about history in the movies, but don’t forget about history of the movies! This short film by the Edison Manufacturing Company exhibits some of the innovations and inventions that were being used in film at the beginning of the 20th century.
LESSON IDEA— HERCULES

The myth of Hercules (Herakles in Greek) has captured the imagination of people for thousands of years, influencing movies, art, and songs. Many kids were introduced to Hercules by Disney’s 1997 film, Hercules, which is a good way to show students how this myth has been adapted over the years.

Start off by asking students what they already know about Hercules. Then show students this clip from the film. Does it confirm or contradict any of their prior impressions? Did any of them get their background knowledge from this film? Then have students read this account (based on ancient primary sources) of Hercules fighting the Lernean Hydra, one of his famed twelve labors. Have your students compare and contrast the two versions of the Hercules myth using this Venn Diagram worksheet. What did the film change? Why would the film deviate from the ancient story? Which did you think was the better version? Next, have your students think about how Hercules is depicted today. What other places might you see his image or hear a story about him? If your students are having a hard time thinking of examples, use these images to show how we use Hercules’ image in society today.

To learn more about Greek religion and temples, The Parthenon in Nashville is an excellent local site to take students, with plenty of lesson plans for teachers.

This lesson idea meets state curriculum standards for 6th grade Social Studies (6.56) and English Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).

LESSON IDEA— THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

African Americans participated in both World War I and World War II, despite not being considered full citizens in their own country. During WWII, efforts were made by the government to ensure that black men and women were given the opportunity to enlist and be drafted for the war effort, to varying degrees of success. Use this essay from Gilder Lehrman to provide context for the African American experience in WWII. The creation of the Tuskegee Airmen unit came on the tails of black community pressure and a letter-writing campaign by the NAACP. While there was a victory gained by black men being allowed to join and fly, this was still a segregated unit and they received heavy resistance from many white officers and soldiers.

The 1995 HBO movie The Tuskegee Airmen (contains some language, though selected clips do not) illustrates the resistance faced by soldiers before even arriving in Tuskegee (until 8:38), during training - from officers (until 13:52) as well as from members of government (until 49:44) (part II until 01:12:36) - and abroad (until 1:25:27). It also shows the eventual acceptance of these units by some white soldiers.

Have students read this pdf about the Double V campaign, then show them the clips from The Tuskegee Airmen linked above. Tell students they should be taking notes on what they see regarding race tensions in the movie, as they will be writing an essay later. Have each student pick a clip from the movie to focus on, and tell them their assignment will be to connect the clip they chose to the larger historical picture at the time by using what they have learned in class, as well as at home research (make sure to go over your guidelines for what internet sites may be used in this research).

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for U.S. History and Geography (US.61, 65), African American History (AAH.32-34), and English Language Arts (Writing).
LESSON IDEA—GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD LUCK

In the post-WWII world, communism was a very real fear for the American people. The 2005 movie *Good Night and Good Luck* showcases how this fear was able to become the Red Scare that was spearheaded by Senator Joseph McCarthy. The movie also highlights the contribution of television journalist Edward R. Murrow to the downfall of McCarthyism.

Have students watch this video to give them a quick introduction to Joseph McCarthy and McCarthyism. Then show students this clip from *Good Night and Good Luck* and take this opportunity to explain the level of scrutiny the entertainment industry faced during this time. Next, show students these clips showing Murrow’s Milo Radulovich report, Murrow’s report on McCarthy, and McCarthy’s response. After this, separate students into groups and give each group a political cartoon from this exhibit. Have students work together to analyze what the cartoons are saying and how they connect to what they have learned so far about McCarthyism. Students will then present their findings to the other students, with the students in the audience responsible for asking thoughtful questions and/or contributing to the discussion.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for U.S. History & Geography (US.76).

LESSON IDEA—LINCOLN

Abraham Lincoln is one of our most well-known presidents. His speeches have become memorialized and implanted in our national memory, but we do not know what he sounded like giving them. Lincoln died twelve years before Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, leaving us with no audio recordings of Lincoln. Many actors have tried to bring Lincoln to life on the big screen, but few have come close historically. One of the most historically accurate interpretations of Lincoln comes from Daniel Day-Lewis in Steven Spielberg’s 2012 movie, *Lincoln*. The film has been praised by both critics and historians for its portrayal of the president, as well as the production design (both of which won Oscars).

Begin by having your students analyze these three excerpts from Lincoln’s *House Divided Speech*, *Gettysburg Address*, and *Second Inaugural Address*. It will be best to divide your students into three groups for this activity. Walk around the classroom and ask the groups about the tone, language, intent, and context behind each excerpt. After an appropriate amount of time, have the groups select someone to perform their excerpt as they think Lincoln would have. After the three performances, pass out these excerpts from three “ear-witness” accounts about Lincoln’s real voice. Have the groups analyze these new sources, making note of the words describing Lincoln’s voice, if the language still has the same force behind them, and if it changes the group performance. With these sources in mind, have the students perform their excerpts again with the changes made.

After the performances, play these clips of Daniel Day-Lewis’ performance as the president. Were any of the groups close to the performance in the movie? Did the performance align with sources? Why or why not? Another idea would be to analyze other performances of Lincoln and compare and contrast them. If you would like more resources for this lesson idea, please refer to the Abraham Lincoln Resource Guide and *Gettysburg Address Lesson Plan* from the Library of Congress.

This lesson idea meets curriculum standards for 8th grade Social Studies (8.76) and Theatre (2.0; Character Acting).
King Arthur [between 1900 and 1912; sculpture created before 1529]

Disney’s *The Sword and the Stone* is one of the definitive films about King Arthur. Could King Arthur have been real? How have the Arthurian legends evolved over time? What can these legends tell us about early British culture? Use *The Camelot Project* by the University of Rochester, as well as this newsletter (third lesson idea), for ideas.

[Man with pointer in front of a projected slide showing an aerial photograph…] [1962]

The Cuban missile crisis was thirteen days in October when the country came extremely close to going to war. The 2000 movie *Thirteen Days* depicts these events and the behind-the-scenes negotiations and debates that went into the decision to enact a blockade on Cuba rather than attacking the country outright. For context and historical comparison, the JFK Library has a day-by-day description of the crisis; this Youtube video gives a quick four minute summary of how and why the crisis came about; and this website contains lesson plans for teaching with movies.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., half-length portrait, facing front / World Telegram & Sun photo by Dick DeMarsico. [1964]

*Selma* is one of the best portrayals of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ‘s ability to move people with his words. Use this clip from the film (the movie is PG-13, but the clip is G) and ask your class how this speech makes them feel. How does King use repetition in his speech? What is he talking about? How does he feel about this? Use these speeches from the real Dr. King to supplement the film clip by continuing the class discussion.


Boss Tweed was an infamous character in New York politics from the mid-nineteenth century until his downfall in the 1870s. William M. Tweed is portrayed in the movie *Gangs of New York*, especially in these two clips, and the Library of Congress has many papers like this one that recount the corrupt practices of Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall (“The Public Debt of Our City and Our County” on columns two and three, and “The World’s Defense” on column four). Try searching “Tammany” or “Tweed” in Chronicling America and use these newspapers to begin discussion of not only political corruption, but how journalism has been used to bring down corruption throughout history.